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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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Letourneau describes current action in Tonkin:
Resident Minister Letourneau, commenting on the Viet Minh offensive in the Nghia Lo area, said that the attack was delivered in the strength of not less than two and probably three divisions. Admitting the deficiency of French intelligence before the attack and a lack of information about eventual Viet Minh intent, he stated that the objective may be to overrun the entire Thai (tribal) territory and perhaps penetrate to Laos. The French official indicated that Tonkin delta defenses would not be weakened to "undertake adventures in fantastically difficult country."

Comment: The Viet Minh attack against Nghia Lo in September 1951 involved only one division and was successfully repulsed by French forces. It is obvious from still meager information that the scale and intensity of this year's attack took the French by surprise. Thus far, the current fighting has resulted in the fall of several French-held outposts and the loss of perhaps one thousand French Union troops. The Viet Minh however has gained more in prestige than in important objectives.

State Dept. review completed

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